Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended)   An image processing apparatus comprising:

decomposing means for decomposing an image into components of a plurality of frequency bands;

converting means for converting coefficient values with regard to at least one frequency band of the plurality of frequency bands in such a manner that a frequency distribution of coefficient values ~~of every~~ in the at least one frequency band is rendered substantially flat ~~will become a prescribed frequency distribution~~; and

generating means for generating an image using the coefficient values obtained by said converting means.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended)   The apparatus according to claim [[2]] 1, wherein said converting means converts the coefficient values based upon a cumulative frequency distribution of the coefficient values.

4. (Original)   The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising changing means for changing a conversion characteristic of the coefficient values obtained by said converting means.

5. (Original)   The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said changing means changes the conversion characteristic in such a manner that coefficient values after conversion will change uniformly at a prescribed ratio.

6. (Original)   The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said decomposing means decomposes the image into components of a plurality of frequency bands using a wavelet transform.

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said converting means converts coefficient values in such a manner that a frequency distribution of coefficient values in a range which is part of a range of ~~values that can be taken on by~~ the coefficient values in the at least one frequency band is rendered substantially flat ~~becomes a prescribed frequency distribution~~.

8. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said converting means holds unchanged coefficient values in a range which is part of a range of values that can be taken on by the coefficient values.

9. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising:

a decomposing step of decomposing an image into components of a plurality of frequency bands;

a converting step of converting coefficient values with regard to at least one frequency band of the plurality of frequency bands in such a manner that a frequency distribution of coefficient values ~~of every~~ in the at least one frequency band is rendered substantially flat ~~will become a prescribed frequency distribution~~; and

a generating step of generating an image using the coefficient values obtained by said converting step.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[10]] 9, wherein said converting step converts the coefficient values based upon a cumulative frequency distribution of the coefficient values.

12. (Original) The method according to claim 9, further comprising a changing step of changing a conversion characteristic of the coefficient values obtained by said converting step.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12, wherein said changing step changes the conversion characteristic in such a manner that coefficient values after conversion will change uniformly at a prescribed ratio.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein said decomposing step decomposes the image into components of a plurality of frequency bands using a wavelet transform.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 9, wherein said converting step converts coefficient values in such a manner that a frequency distribution of coefficient values in a range which is part of a range of ~~values that can be taken on by~~ the coefficient values in the at least one frequency band is rendered substantially flat ~~becomes a prescribed frequency distribution~~.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein said converting step holds unchanged coefficient values in a range which is part of a range of values that can be taken on by the coefficient values.

17. (Currently Amended) A program stored in a computer-readable medium for causing a computer to ~~implement~~ execute the image processing method set forth in claim 9.

18. (Currently Amended) A ~~storage~~ computer-readable medium storing a computer program for causing a computer to ~~implement~~ execute the image processing method set forth in claim 9.